



Recreation Element

“Park improvement is among the most important of the undertakings now before the City. It should have the cordial cooperation of all.”

San Diego Union

Editorial on the City Park System, July 6, 1910

Introduction

The city’s parks, open space, trails, and recreation facilities play an important role in the physical, mental, social, and environmental health of the city. They strengthen the body and assist in maintaining physical well-being. They provide the visual relief and relaxation that refreshes and restores the frame of mind. They create opportunities for personal interaction and provide alternatives to crime. They improve air quality, reduce urban runoff, and decrease the effects of urban heat islands.



The City of San Diego provides four categories of recreation for residents and visitors: population-based, resource-based, open space, and amenity-based recreation.

- Population-based facilities and services are located in close proximity to residential development and are intended to serve the daily needs of the neighborhood and community. When possible, they adjoin schools in order to share facilities, and ideally are within walking distance of the residences within their service area
- Resource-based parks are located at, or centered on, notable natural or man-made features (beaches, canyons, habitat systems, lakes, historic sites, and cultural facilities) and are intended to serve the citywide population as well as visitors.
- Natural open space is city-owned land located throughout the city consisting of canyons, mesas, and other natural landforms. This open space is intended to preserve and protect native plants and animals, while providing public access and enjoyment by the use of hiking, biking, and equestrian trails.
- Amenity-based recreation facilities are golf courses, dog parks, skate parks, amphitheaters and other similar type facilities that are not necessarily population-based that are strategically placed to serve the needs of several communities. These facilities may be developed as stand-alone facilities or grouped together.

These four categories of recreation, including facilities and programs, constitute San Diego’s municipal park and recreation system.



Recreation and physical activity are important components in fighting and preventing childhood obesity. According the National Institutes of Health, childhood obesity has reached epidemic proportion in the United States. The percentage of elementary school children considered obese has doubled since 1980, from 7% to 14%. Health impacts associated with childhood obesity are: high blood pressure, high cholesterol, type II diabetes, sleep apnea, and respiratory conditions such as asthma. There are psychological effects related to obesity such as feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and embarrassment caused by peer teasing. Contributing factors include replacement of physical play time with computerized play, increased television viewing, readily available fast foods, and large portion prepackaged foods.

One way to help prevent obesity and make physical activity attractive to overweight and obese children is to provide recreational facilities within a safe walking and biking distance. Such facilities should include varied and challenging facilities and activities that provide opportunities for overweight or obese children to actively participate without fear of being taunted or embarrassed by their peers. The American Obesity Society, whose mission it is to educate the public and encourage efforts to prevent obesity (especially among children), provides recommendations on physical activity. The recommendations include encouraging children to: participate in team sports at school or within the community; enroll in structured activities such as gymnastics, tennis, and martial arts; encourage free play; join in neighborhood recreation programs; and take part in non-competitive lifetime physical activities such as walking, biking, hiking, and dancing.

The Recreation Element is not an isolated component of the General Plan. It is interconnected, in varying degrees to other elements of the General Plan. The Conservation Element provides additional policies for protecting and preserving our recreational natural resources and open space. The Urban Design Element recognizes the opportunities that park and recreation facilities provide toward creation of safe and walkable communities, distinctive neighborhoods, and significant public spaces and civic architecture. The Strategic Framework / Land Use Element reinforces the importance of recreation as a quality of life factor that needs to be integrated into communities. The Mobility Element links the recreation value associated with mobility policies for development of a pedestrian master plan and a trails master plan.

City of San Diego definitions for ‘park’ and ‘open space’ vary according to the context in which the terms are used (see Table RE-1, Park and Open Space Terminology). For purposes of this General Plan, designated open space and parks are those areas of the city that are identified in adopted land use plans as open space or parks. As such, these areas include population and resource-based parks, open space with natural or cultural value (including MHPA lands), and areas identified in land use plans that may not contain natural or cultural characteristics, but instead function to provide a land use buffer, visual relief, or similar purpose. Figure RE-1, Community Plan Designated Open Space/Parks Map identifies open space and parks in this context.

San Diego’s environment, its coastal location, temperate climate, and diverse topography, contribute to the city’s recreation needs. The goals and policies of the Recreation Element have been developed

to take advantage of the city’s natural environment, to build upon existing recreation facilities and services, and to adapt to future recreation needs. To accomplish this, the Recreation Element identifies goals and policies to address a diversity of recreation opportunities, preservation of existing facilities, the accessibility of facilities and services, cooperative efforts to attain parkland and facilities, open space and resource-based parks, and guidelines for park and recreation facilities.

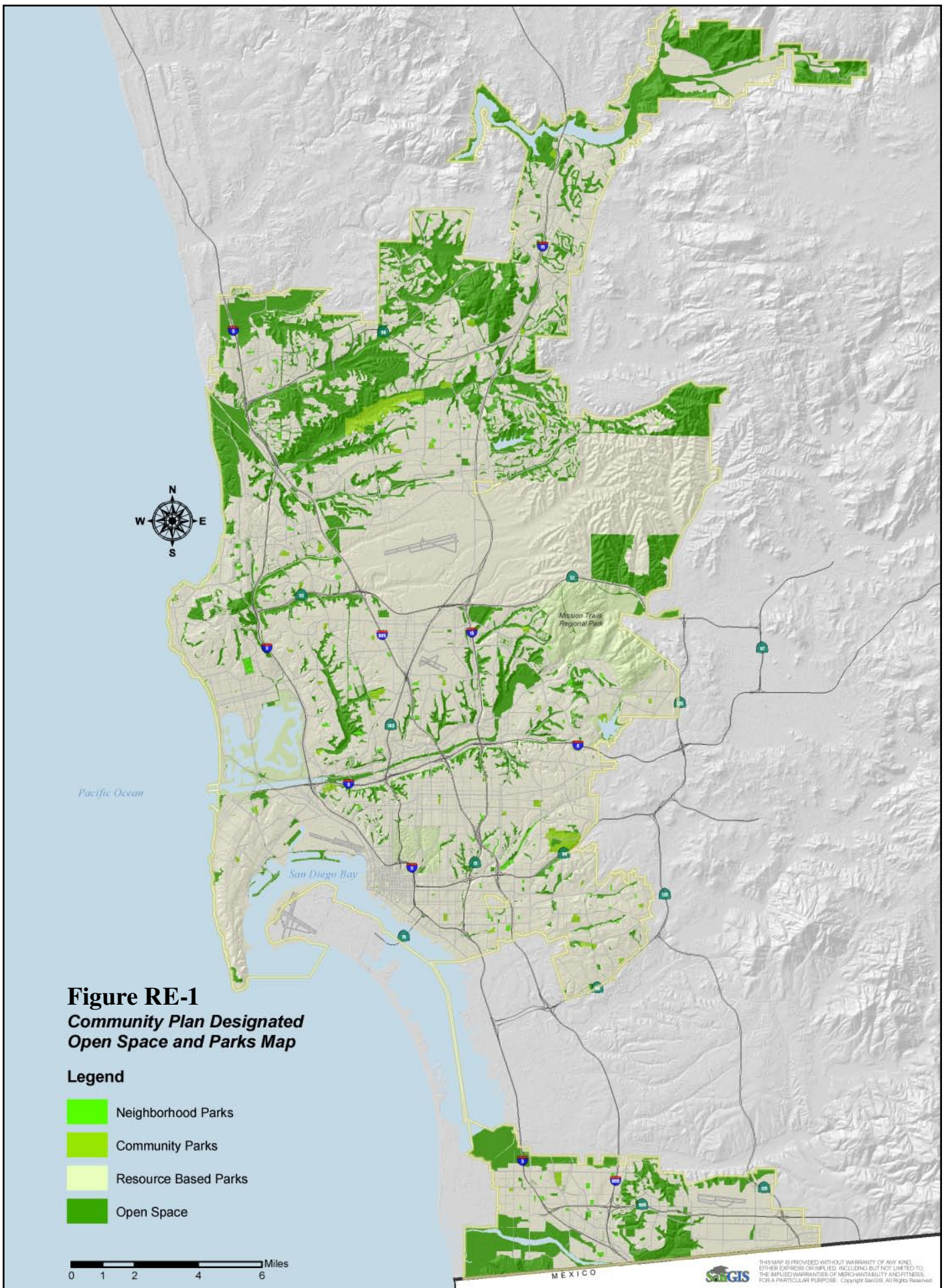
Table RE-1 Park & Open Space Terminology			
Context of Use	Term	Description	Attributes
General Plan & Community Land Use Plans	Designated Parks & Designated Open Space	Land identified in adopted land use plan for use as either population or resource-based parks or open space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicly or privately owned Satisfies park and open space objectives of a land use plan May be modified by City Council through a land use plan amendment Includes Multi-Habitat Preservation Area (MHPA) lands May also include resources to protect public good (e.g., aesthetics, flood plains, historic)
	Designated Parkland	Land set aside without ordinance or statute requiring park or open space use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicly owned and managed by Park & Recreation Dept May be used for any public purpose deemed necessary by the City Council Includes population-based and other types of parks and open space uses Reviewed periodically for consideration as dedicated parkland May be designated through subdivision process
Park & Recreation Lands	Dedicated Parkland	Land dedicated by City ordinance or State Legislature for park and recreation purposes only (including open space).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicly owned and managed by Park & Recreation Dept Limited to park, recreation, and cemetery use May include population-based and other types of parks and open space uses Two-thirds voter approval required to remove dedication Proposed dedications require recommendation by Park and Recreation Board prior to City Council consideration
	Other Development Restricted Land	Land encumbered by open space easement in favor of the city, or identified in the subdivision process as an open space lot.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not publicly owned Future development controlled by restrictions placed on property by the city City Council action required to remove restrictions May also have an open space designation in community plan
Development Process			

Figure RE-1
Community Plan Designated
Open Space and Parks Map

Legend

- Neighborhood Parks
- Community Parks
- Resource Based Parks
- Open Space

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A. Diversity

Goals

- A diverse range of active and passive recreation opportunities that achieve the needs and desires of each neighborhood and community
- A park and open space system that is integrated into the community

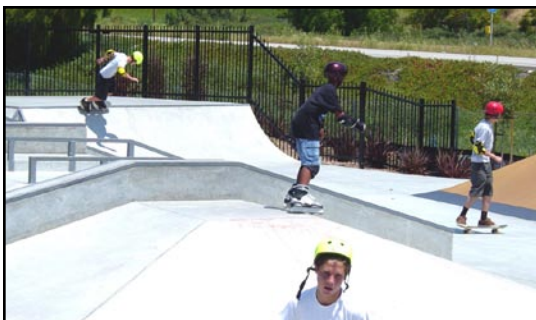
Discussion

San Diego's climate, topography, and location define the city and enhance its recreational opportunities. San Diego is fortunate to have a temperate climate that makes comfortable year-round outdoor recreation possible. The hillsides, canyons, mesas, and floodplains that define the city's topography provide numerous and varied recreational opportunities. The city's coastal location, its beaches, bays, and estuaries, provide a combination of active and passive recreation. San Diego is also defined by its diverse neighborhoods and communities. These neighborhoods and communities are reflective of the wide array of cultures, income levels, ethnicities, and household types that represent the city and influence its recreation choices.



Recreation and leisure-time activities are defined by the user, and include active and passive pursuits. While some may participate in active recreation such as organized or programmed sports, others may choose passive activities such as reading under a shade tree, strolling through a garden, or observing nature. Individual recreation choices are based on a number of factors including location, age, family composition, schedule, ability, and culture.

The city's park and recreation system offers a broad range of recreation opportunities. It is a network of park lands, open space, recreation facilities, programs, and staff services designed to meet the specialized needs of individual neighborhoods and communities. In recognition of the wide array of recreation and leisure-time



choices available, the city provides numerous opportunities for recreation and leisurely pursuits throughout the city including sports fields and leagues, pools, tennis courts, parks, beaches, picnic areas, skate parks, dog parks, programs for youths and adults, hiking/biking and equestrian trails, and areas of scenic and visual enjoyment.



Policies

- RE-A.1. Provide a diversity of recreation programs to meet the demographically changing needs of the community.
- RE-A.2. Sustain partnerships with neighborhoods in the planning, site selection, design, and construction of park and recreation centers to ensure neighborhood and community needs are satisfied.
- RE-A.3. Include community recreation needs in community plans to ensure recreation facilities and programs reflect community needs and desires.

B. Preservation

Goals

- Preservation and enhancement of existing parks, open space, and recreation programs
- Effective management, preservation, and enrichment of natural, cultural, and historic resources that serve as recreation facilities

Discussion



San Diegans place a high value on the availability of park and recreation opportunities, and increasingly recognize their importance as a requisite companion to urban living and increasing densities. As San Diego continues to grow, so will its demand for additional housing. Since undeveloped residential land in the city is diminishing, much of the housing planned for the future will be in the form of infill development and redevelopment. This will be especially evident in the older, well established urban communities. Preservation and enhancement of existing population-based parks, recreation programs, and open space to serve existing and future residents is essential.

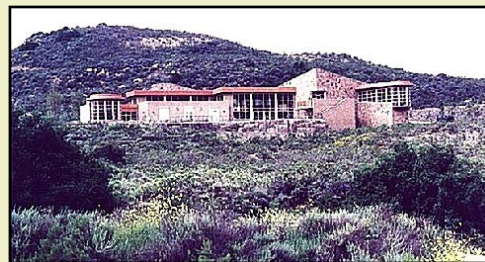
Key to the preservation and enhancement of open space and parkland are the city's resource-based parks which are home to many of the city's cultural and natural resources. Cultural resources are man-



made physical features associated with human activity. In addition to their historic value, cultural resources often function as recreation facilities. The Old Mission Dam (Padre Dam) in Mission Trails Regional Park and the Presidio and Fort Stockton in Presidio Park are examples of cultural resources that provide recreational value. Natural resources are the naturally occurring environmental attributes of the region. They include the beaches, canyons, mesas, rivers, floodplains, and associated plants and animals. These natural resources, like cultural resources, provide varying opportunities for recreation. Cultural and natural resources should be protected and preserved as reminders of man's historic presence, the regions' natural history, and to provide maximum educational, recreational, and aesthetic benefit for the citizens of, and visitors to San Diego.

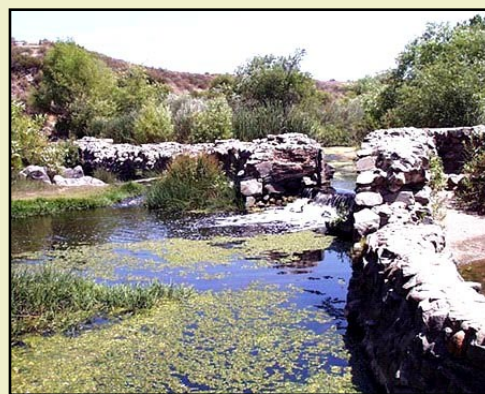
Policies

- RE-B.1. Protect existing parklands and open space from unauthorized encroachment by adjacent development through appropriate enforcement measures.
- RE-B.2. Protect and enhance resource-based parks and open space lands through appropriate means which include sensitive planning, open space dedications on abutting portions of adjacent lands, and land acquisitions.
- RE-B.3. Identify and secure funding sources necessary for protecting and preserving resource-based parks and open space.
- RE-B.4. Preserve all beaches for public only purposes, including the protection of sensitive habitat and species.
- RE-B.5. Design parks to preserve, enhance, and incorporate items of natural, cultural, or historic importance.



Mission Trails Regional Park has been called the third jewel in the City of San Diego Park System (Balboa Park and Mission Bay Park are the first and second). Established in 1974, Mission Trails Regional Park is one of the largest urban parks in the United States. Originally used by the Kumeyaay Indians, it is the site of the Old Mission Dam, built to store water for the Mission San Diego de Alcalá. The park encompasses approximately eight thousand acres of natural open space land. Its rugged hills, valleys, and open areas represent a San Diego prior to the landing of Cabrillo in San Diego Bay in 1542.

Mission Trails Regional Park provides San Diego residents and visitors a way to explore the cultural, historical, and outdoor recreational aspects of San Diego. The park is operated and maintained by the City of San Diego in close partnership with the Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation. With more than 40 miles of trails, boating on Lake Murray, camping at Kumeyaay Lake, numerous informative hikes, and a state-of-the-art Visitor & Interpretive Center, Mission Trails Regional Park has something to offer everyone.





- RE-B.6. Protect parks from over commercialization and privatization.
- RE-B.7. Protect beaches and canyons from uncontrolled urban run off.
- RE-B.8. Develop programs to educate the public on the variety, importance, and recreational uses of the city's natural and cultural resources.
- RE-B.9. Balance the needs of land for residential, commercial and industrial use with the needs of land for parks and open space use.

C. Accessibility

Goals

- Park and recreation facilities that are designed to accommodate the needs of a diverse population
- Park and recreation facilities that promote safe and timely access by foot, bicycle, public transit, automobile, and modes of travel

Discussion

Park and recreation facilities enhance the quality of life for all San Diegans. The Strategic Framework Element recommends that park and recreation facilities be integrated into the urban fabric so they become a convenient and easily accessible part of the daily life of San Diegans. San Diego's recreation system is comprised of a large number of facility types and programs dispersed throughout the city.



Recreation access has three components: linkage, opportunity, and availability. Regarding recreation linkages, ideally all facilities should be located within walking distance of residential neighborhoods and employment centers. However, given the wide variety of recreation facility types, their use characteristics, and associated costs, it is not feasible to locate every type of recreation facility in every community. Those facilities which are not convenient and easily accessible to all communities should be equitably distributed throughout the city in locations that provide accessibility to the city's diverse population. The Mobility Element provides additional recommendations regarding access including policies for development of citywide trails master plan and a citywide pedestrian master plan.



Recreation opportunity addresses the need for facilities to be accessible to the broadest population possible. This means facilities should be optimally located and designed to address those with special needs. They should be located along transit routes that provide access to the disabled, elderly, teens, and the economically disadvantaged. They should be designed as open facilities that can be easily navigated by seniors and persons with disabilities. Outdoor recreational opportunities should also be available to a diverse population within the city's open space and resource-based parks. This can be accomplished through development of accessible overlooks and trails, where feasible, and interpretive and directional signs.

Recreation availability speaks to the need for facilities to be open for use by the general public. Many recreation facilities set aside time for exclusive use by programmed activities such as sport leagues, clubs, or other private groups. These programmed activities do fulfill recreational needs of the community. However, a balance between programmed and non-programmed use of recreation facilities must be achieved to make facilities available to the greatest number of the users.



Policies

- RE-C.1. Provide new and upgraded park and recreation facilities that employ barrier free design principles that make them accessible to all San Diegans regardless of age or physical ability.
- RE-C.2. Provide barrier free trails and outdoor experiences & opportunities for the disabled community where feasible.
- RE-C.3. Provide recreation programs and services specifically designed to meet the needs of children, the increasing elderly population, and the under served teenage population.
- RE-C.4. Equitably distribute specialized recreation facilities that are not feasibly located in most community parks based on broader service areas.
- RE-C.5. Transit.
 - Improve public transit to park and recreation facilities.
 - a. Consider the location of existing and proposed recreation facilities in developing transit routes.
 - b. Locate transit stops at entries to neighborhood, community, and regional recreation facilities.



RE-C.6. Linkages.

Provide safe and direct physical linkages to and within park and recreation facilities and open space areas.

- a. Provide pedestrian and bicycle paths between recreation facilities and residential development.
- b. Designate pedestrian and bicycle corridors, and where appropriate, equestrian corridors, that link residential neighborhoods with park and recreation facilities, trails, and open space.
- c. Provide as part of all commercial, industrial, and multi-dwelling unit developments bicycle facilities that are visible, convenient, and secure.
- d. Improve public access through development of, and improvements to, multi-use trails within urban canyons and other open space areas.

RE-C.7. Public access.

Provide public access to open space for recreational purposes.

- a. Provide public access into Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) open space for only those recreational purposes deemed compatible with the preservation goals of the MSCP Subarea Plan.
- b. Provide public access at locations consistent with conservation goals.
- c. Preserve and identify public beach access.

RE-C.8. Balance the scheduling of programmed and non-programmed use of recreation facilities to provide access to a diversity of users.

D. Joint Use and Cooperative Partnerships

Goals

- Efficient use of land through sharing of public and private resources for active and passive recreation
- Public facilities and infrastructure utilized for recreation activities and programs
- Joint use and lease agreements that contribute to the recreational and physical education needs of the community



Discussion

Creative methods for cost-effective and efficient use of public lands are required if recreation facilities are to be improved, enhanced, and expanded to meet future needs. San Diego's expanding urban development and its desire to protect and preserve parkland, recreation facilities, and open space have limited the availability of, and placed constraints on, developable lands. One creative means of providing additional lands and facilities for public recreation use is through joint use of public and non-profit facilities such as parks, swimming pools, and schools. Joint use facilities can mean any land area or physical structure shared by one or more public or non-profit entities. An example of a joint use facility is a ball field at a middle school that is exclusively used for school purposes during school hours, but is available for public use when school is not in session. Joint use serves an increasingly important role in providing recreation facilities in the older, more densely populated urban communities.

San Diego has a well established history of developing successful joint use recreation facilities. The City of San Diego entered into its first joint use agreement in September, 1948 with the San Diego Unified School District. The city is now a party to approximately 100 similar agreements between it and the San Diego Unified, Solana Beach, Del Mar Union, Poway Unified, and San Ysidro School Districts. These agreements have accommodated the need for recreation space by designating school sites for off-hour recreation use. The agreements have resulted in space for multi-purpose courts, turf fields, lighted and unlighted multi-purpose fields, and parking lots in communities throughout the city.

In addition to the continued pursuit of joint use opportunities with school districts, there are opportunities for new cooperative partnerships with governmental agencies and other entities with land holdings. Underutilized public facilities, such as surplus land, remnant parcels, rights-of-way, structures, and underground facilities can provide recreation opportunities. Rights-of-way provide opportunities for trails that link recreation facilities. Surplus land and remnant parcels could be developed into population and resource based recreation facilities. Underutilized structures could provide space for recreation programs, and underground facilities could possibly provide recreation space at ground level. Once identified and developed, such cooperative partnerships could provide additional recreation facilities and services.



The City Heights Urban Village is an outstanding example of joint-use and cooperative partnerships between public and private organizations. The project is the result of a partnership between the City of San Diego, San Diego Unified School District, the San Diego Foundation, CityLink Investment Corp., Price Charities, and the San Diego Housing Commission. The City Heights Urban Village recreated the core of the City Heights community, establishing a pedestrian-friendly town square that includes important public facilities. The village includes the City Heights Weingart Branch Library, Rosa Parks Elementary School, the City Heights Recreation Center, playing fields, public swimming pool, municipal gymnasium, performance area, police substation, and an adult learning center. Also within the village are offices, a retail center, and 116 townhomes. The urban village covers 10 city blocks within the City Heights Redevelopment Project Area.



Policies

- RE-D.1. Engage in multi-purpose planning to provide a variety of compatible recreational activities within a given location.
- RE-D.2. Work with local school districts, colleges, and universities to continue development of on-campus joint-use recreation facilities including multi-purpose courts, parking lots, and multi-purpose athletic fields.
- RE-D.3. Support local school districts' efforts to expand secondary school sites that result in additional joint-use opportunities while balancing the competing needs of recreation and housing.
- RE-D.4. Strive for mutually agreeable long-term, joint-use agreements with other public agencies to assure recreation for future generations.
- RE-D.5. Pursue, for park development, surplus school property for acquisition or lease.
- RE-D.6. Rights-of-way.
Establish a policy to address under utilized or unnecessary city rights-of-way.
- Direct that an inventory of those rights-of-way be maintained.
 - Develop criteria to determine potential value for bike, pedestrian, and equestrian linkages, or for access to open space canyons.
- RE-D.7. Design public facilities to incorporate recreational elements such as children's play areas, rooftop courts, pocket parks, and usable public plazas.
- RE-D.8. Pursue partnerships with public agencies and non-profit entities to provide additional recreational space within the city such as parks, linear parks, trail connections, parkways, bike paths, and other recreation facilities. Potential partners for recreation land and facilities may include, but are not limited to:
- Metropolitan Transit System
 - San Diego Unified Port District
 - California Department of Transportation
 - U. S. Department of Defense
 - Other governmental agencies and jurisdictions
 - Utility and railroad companies
 - Non-profit youth and recreation entities
- RE-D.9. Explore utilization of government-owned surplus or remnant parcels for public park use.



RE-D.10. Develop agreements that provide acre for acre credit when the joint use facilities are developed and implement population-based park needs.

E. Open Space Lands and Resource-Based Parks

Goals

- An open space system that provides for the preservation and management of natural resources, enhancement of outdoor recreation opportunities, and protection of the public health and safety
- An urban form determined by the varied terrain and natural drainage systems of San Diego
- A system of pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian paths linking neighborhoods, parks, and open space

Discussion

Open space may be defined as land or water areas generally free from development or developed with very low intensity uses that respect the characteristics of the natural environment. Open space is generally non-urban in character and may have utility for: park and recreation purposes; conservation of land, water, or other natural resources; historic or scenic purposes; or support of the mission of military installations as detailed in §65560 of the California Government Code. Open space that may be designated for outdoor recreation includes, but is not limited to: areas of outstanding scenic, historic, and cultural value; areas particularly suited for park and recreation purposes, including access to passive recreation space adjacent to waterfronts, rivers and creeks; urban canyons; specified areas within the city's MSCP; and areas that serve as links between major recreation uses and open space, such as utility easements, river banks, and trails. The Conservation Element further defines and expands on policies for preservation of open space.



As stated in the introduction of the Recreation Element, the City of San Diego definitions for 'open space' and 'park' vary according to the context in which the terms are used. Table RE-1, Park and Open Space Terminology, identifies the three contexts in which open space and parks are used, defines them in that context, and lists the general attributes for each. For purposes of this General Plan, designated open space lands are those areas of the city that are identified in adopted land use plans as open space.



Mission Bay Park was developed from the 1940s through the 1960s using a tidal marsh that Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo named “False Bay” in 1542. In 1944, a Chamber of Commerce committee recommended development of Mission Bay into a tourist and recreation center to help diversify the city’s economy. In the late 1940s, dredging and filling operations began converting the marsh into the jewel that is today, Mission Bay Park. Twenty-five million cubic yards of sand and silt were dredged to create the land forms of the park, which now is almost entirely man-made.

Mission Bay Park comprises 27 miles of shoreline. Swimmers, boating enthusiasts, and sun lovers are drawn to Mission Bay’s beaches and water activities. The park offers a wide variety of recreation facilities and activities including boat docks and launching facilities, sailboat and motor rentals, 14 miles of biking and walking paths, basketball courts, and playgrounds for children. It’s one of San Diego’s most visited parks.

Resource-based parks are often located within open space, as previously defined. They are intended to preserve and make available to all residents and visitors those areas of outstanding scenic, natural, or cultural interest. Examples of resource-based parks are Mission Trails Regional Park, Mission Bay Park, and Balboa Park. Although resource-based parks are not developed to address the specific needs of any one community, portions of them can, and do function to fulfill the local neighborhood and community park needs of surrounding residents.

Policies

RE-E.1. Protect and enhance resource-based parks through planning and acquisition.

RE-E.2. Sensitive development.
Provide for sensitive development of recreation uses within and adjacent to open space lands.

- a. Include only those development features and amenities that do not encroach upon or harm the feature or resource that inspires the open space or resource-based park
- b. Design and maintain open space lands to preserve or enhance topographic and other natural site characteristics.
- c. Create or enhance open space multi-use trails pursuant to a

citywide trails master plan to accommodate, where appropriate, pedestrians/hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians.

- d. Locate canyon and other open space trails to take advantage of existing pathways and maintenance requirements where possible and desirable.
- e. Preserve existing public open space view corridors, such as views to the Pacific Ocean, other bodies of water, and significant topographic features.
- f. Preserve open space along lakes, rivers, and creek beds for passive public recreation uses that are consistent with MSCP preservation goals.



- g. Plant only native plant and non-invasive naturalized plant materials adjacent to open space lands.
 - h. Plant only native plant materials in open space lands intended for natural resource protection.
- RE-E.3. Acquire remaining private beaches in the La Jolla Community for public use.
- RE-E.4. Balance passive recreation needs of trail use with environmental preservation.
- RE-E.5. Provide open space lands for outdoor recreation purposes including, but not limited to:
- Locations of outstanding scenic, historic, and cultural value.
 - Corridors that link recreation facilities and open space areas such as utility easements, river and streams banks, trails and scenic highway corridors
 - Sites particularly suited for park and recreation purposes, such as areas adjacent to and providing access to beaches, lakeshores, rivers, and streams.

F. Park and Recreation Guidelines

Goals

- A Park and Recreation system that meets the needs of residents and visitors
- Alternative methods of providing recreation facilities and infrastructure where development of typical facilities and infrastructure are limited by land constraints

Discussion

As the city has grown, so have the quantity, quality, and distribution of recreation opportunities. New parks and open space have been acquired and facilities and services have been expanded in response to population-based needs. Recreation activities in the form of cultural, athletic, sport, social, and craft programs have been developed to serve a wide variety of the population throughout the city at parks, recreation centers, athletic fields, and public schools. Table RE-2, Community Plan Designated Parks and Open space, provides a breakdown of the types and quantities of designated parks and open space.



**Table RE-2
Community Plan Designated Parks and Open Space***

Parks & Open Space	Acres
Designated Population-Based Parks Mini-Park, Neighborhood Park Community Park, Recreation Center, & Swimming Pool	
Acres	2,915.45
Designated Open Space Resource-Based Parks Open Space Parks Golf Courses Remaining Open Space Lands	
	6,236.79
	16,434.63
	3,335.66
	28,365.05
Acres	54,372.13
Total Acres**	57,287.58

* See Table RE-1 for the park and open space description for General Plan and Community Land Use Plans.

** Does not include the 5,977-acre San Diego/La Jolla Underwater Park.

Although improving, a variation continues to exist between communities with respect to facilities provided, total population-based park acres, and existing population-based park acres per 1,000 residents. Of most concern is the relative lack of neighborhood and community facilities in portions of older urbanized neighborhoods. Reasons for this are related to the age of the communities, and the types of facilities included in the calculation of population-based parks per resident. First, the older urbanized communities were developed without specified park development guidelines or park fees. Second, large resource-based parks such as Mission Bay Park and Balboa Park, which serve the needs of the entire city and visitors, but also serve nearby residents, are not given credit toward providing benefits of population-based parks. Adding to the difficulty in developing new facilities in older urbanized communities is the lack of land readily available for development of parks. Retrofitting those neighborhoods with new parks must be achieved with solutions that balance the often competing needs of parks and housing. The Public Facilities, Services and Safety Element provides additional goals and policies related to provision of recreation facilities.

There are many recreation facilities within the City that, while not under the control of the city, provide a wide variety of recreation opportunities for the public. These facilities come in many forms, from government-owned and operated parks to commercial endeavors such as fitness clubs. Each serves to increase recreation opportunities, if only for a specified time. Of significant benefit to the public are those facilities that are owned, operated, and maintained by other governmental agencies



and non-profit entities. These facilities tend to represent long term investments in recreation and are designed to be accessible to the widest breadth of the public. Examples of these are the Cabrillo National Monument, Torrey Pines State Park, the Salvation Army Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center, and the numerous non-profit recreation facilities located throughout the city. While not owned and operated by the city, it should be recognized that these facilities do provide a valuable asset to the city.

An ideal balance of recreational opportunities throughout the city is best achieved by considering a number of factors such as numerical criteria for park acres and facilities, economic feasibility, community needs and desires, topographic conditions, changing demographics, and evolving trends in recreation. Neighborhood and community facilities should take a variety of forms in response to the specific needs and desires of the residents involved. Neighborhood parks should be oriented toward achieving maximum neighborhood involvement in terms of interest, participation, and support. They should be an important element in creating neighborhood identity.

Community facilities should supplement those in the neighborhood and provide for a greater variety of facilities and active programmed uses. Table RE-3, Park and Recreation Guidelines, provides a strategy for development of population-based recreation facilities. The purpose is two-fold. First is to provide a means of measuring the degree to which park and recreation facilities are developed; and second, to equitably provide facilities throughout the city. The guidelines should be used with discretion rather than mechanically. They are a basic tool for guiding and evaluating the adequacy of service to a given area and to the city as a whole. Their application should be related to economic feasibility and the nature of the specific neighborhood or community, and should allow for flexibility as



On May 26, 1868, when San Diego consisted of only 2,301 residents and 915 houses, a 1,400 acre tract of nine city pueblo lots was set aside as "City Park." Twenty-four years later, in 1892, Kate O. Sessions asked city officials to lease 30 acres of "City Park" for a nursery, and in return, she would plant 100 trees per year throughout the park. In 1902, the Park Improvement Committee employed landscape architect Samuel Parsons, to develop a comprehensive plan for the park. By 1910 the parkland began to look much as it does today. In that same year a contest was held to rename the park. Balboa, in honor of Spanish explorer Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, the first European to see the Pacific Ocean, was selected, in part, because the park also offered wide views of the Pacific Ocean.

Balboa Park owes much of its development to two world fairs, the Panama-California Exposition of 1915-16, and the California Pacific International Exposition of 1935-36. The design of the 1915 Panama-California Exposition reflected Spanish Colonial Architecture. The Cabrillo Bridge, most of the Cultural Center buildings along El Prado, and the Spreckels Organ Pavilion were built for the Exposition, under the supervision of architect, Bertrum Goodhue. The development of the Southern Palisades grew out of the California Pacific International Exposition and was designed to represent a complete history of the Southwest, from prehistoric times to the modern era under the direction of Richard Requa, Director of Architecture and Landscaping. Many of the buildings were designed to be reminders of Indian Pueblo or Mayan building design.



Balboa Park is comprised of more than 1,100 acres. It includes fifteen museums, various gardens, arts and international culture associations, recreation areas, and the San Diego Zoo. This urban park at the edge of downtown is renowned for its brilliant displays of seasonal flowers, shady groves of trees, and meandering paths through rolling lawns. It offers something historical, horticultural, educational, and recreational for everyone. Approximately 14 million visitors come to the park each year.



specific areas change or the needs and desires of the residents change. Table RE-4, Guidelines for Population-Based Parks Acreage, provides the methodology used for establishing the guideline of providing 2.4 usable acres of population-based park per 1,000 residents.

The guidelines for overall provision of urban recreation lands (all parks and open space lands) are more flexible than those for only population-based facilities. Citywide, community plan designated parks and open space lands should amount to approximately 20 acres for each 1,000 residents. Based on the most current population data (2004) of 1,294,032 residents, community plan designated parks and open space amount to 34.62 acres per 1,000 residents citywide.

Designated open space parks and resource-based parks should provide between 15 and 17 acres/1000 residents. Currently, open space parks and resource based parks amount to 17.52 acres per 1,000 residents. Based on the same data, community plan designated population based parks amount to 2.25 acres per 1,000 residents citywide.

Constraints related to land availability, potential loss of housing, or funding may make implementation of the Park and Recreation Guidelines infeasible in portions of some communities. Additionally, strict compliance with the guidelines can limit the flexibility needed to meet community specific needs and demands. Alternative methods of providing recreation facilities need to be available to achieve citywide equity where constraints may make meeting guidelines infeasible, or to satisfy community specific needs and demands where flexibility is required. The enhancements in Table RE-3 provide additional means for achieving equity by increasing recreation opportunities, improving utilization, or providing additional recreation facilities.

Table RE-3
Park and Recreation Guidelines and Enhancements

Category	Recreation Facility or Type	Guidelines	Typical Components and Requirements	Enhancements*
Population**	Neighborhood Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 acres or an acre per acre credit up to 5 acres for joint use adjacent to a school (see policies in section RE-D) • Serves a population of 3,500-5,000 within a one-half mile radius 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design/facilities based on population and use characteristics • Elements may include: play and picnic areas, children's play areas, multi-purpose courts, multi-purpose lawn areas, comfort stations, and landscaping • Comply with applicable Park and Recreation standards and policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vest Pocket Park and Mini parks • Permeable edges of regional parks with neighborhood park facilities that satisfy neighborhood park guidelines • Facilities not normally associated with a neighborhood park but provide additional neighborhood recreational opportunities • Addition of new long term recreation programs • Indoor recreational space • Artificial turf that extends use and minimizes downtime for maintenance • Public plazas and recreational landscaped areas
	Community Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 acres or an acre per acre credit up to 7 acres for joint use adjacent to a school (see policies in section RE-D) • Serves a population of 18,000-25,000 within a one and one-half mile radius 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities to supplement neighborhood parks • Based on needs, preferences, and use characteristics of community • Elements may include: athletic fields, multi-purpose courts, recreation center, play areas, picnic areas, comfort stations, lawn acres, off-leash dog park, skate park, swimming pools, and landscaping • Comply with applicable Park and Recreation standards and policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements or expansions to community parks facilities may include new or expanded recreation center, swimming pool, and sports courts • Permeable edges of regional parks with community park facilities that satisfy neighborhood park guidelines • May include citywide facilities to be located throughout the city to address deficits in population based needs • Addition of new long term recreation programs • Facilities not normally associated with a community park but provide additional community recreational opportunities • Artificial turf that extends use and minimizes downtime for maintenance

**Table RE-3
Park and Recreation Guidelines and Enhancements**

Category	Recreation Facility or Type	Guidelines	Typical Components and Requirements	Enhancements*
	Swimming Pool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Per 50,000 residents within one and a one-half to two miles*** 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be stand-alone facility or located within a community park • Comply with applicable Park and Recreation standards and policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements or expansions to existing swimming pool facility such as a secondary pool and other associated facilities
	Recreation Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Per 18,000-25,000 residents within one and one-half mile radius 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be stand-alone facility or located within a community park • Elements may include gymnasiums, indoor courts, craft rooms and other community serving facilities • Comply with applicable Park and Recreation standards and policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements or expansions to existing recreation center such as a gymnasium, indoor sports courts, craft rooms, and other associated facilities
Open Space	Citywide Resource-Based Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 15 and 17 acres per 1,000 residents based on residential densities of service area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located at site of distinctive scenic, natural, or cultural feature • Intended for citywide use • Developed amenities should not impair feature or resource • Includes parks such as beaches and shorelines Balboa Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements that may be determined to increase recreation opportunity.
	Open Space Lands		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City-owned land located throughout the city consisting of canyons, mesas, and other natural landforms. • Facility may be stand alone or collocated • Stand alone facilities that are unique to the character of community • May include off-leash dog parks, golf courses, water play areas, skate parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple-use trails, staging areas, overlooks, and interpretive signs.
Amenity	Amenity Facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities that do not trigger a demand in every community but may be provided to serve the needs of several communities 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements that may be determined to increase recreation opportunity.

* The enhancements identified are representative, and not exclusive.

** Population calculations determined using projected dwelling units by community and current city wide population per household census data by housing type.



Table RE-4
Guidelines for Population-Based Parks Acreage

Cumulative Population	Acres*	Neighborhood Parks (NP)	Community Parks (CP)	Acres/1,000 Residents
5,000	10	1	---	NP- 40 ac/25,000 = 1.6 CP- 20 ac/25,000 = 0.8 2.4
10,000	10	1	---	
15,000	10	1	---	
20,000	10	1	---	
25,000	20	Included within CP acres	1	2.4 acres/1,000 Residents

* Acres are net usable.

Policies

- RE-F.1. Community Plans.
Use community plan updates to further refine the Park and Recreation Guidelines.
- Identify community specific recreation needs and desires.
 - Tailor the Park and Recreation Guidelines to community specific conditions.
 - Identify opportunities for recreation enhancements in communities where compliance with Park and Recreation Guidelines are not feasible or where specific community needs are not satisfied.
- RE-F.2. Park Master Plan.
Develop a citywide Park Master Plan.
- Develop implementation strategies to meet urban needs and address inequitable access to recreational resources.
 - Include a needs assessment.
 - Include policies that further refine the Park and Recreation Guidelines.
 - Develop guidelines for enhancements that include credit toward fulfilling population-based Park and Recreation Guidelines.
 - Include measurements of recreation performance based on the Park and Recreation Guidelines and enhancements.
- RE-F.3. Designate as a priority, recreational funding resources for public recreation facilities in under served neighborhoods.
- RE-F.4. Designate as a priority in under served neighborhoods, scheduling of neighborhood parks and facilities for local youth activities.



- RE-F.5. Improve distribution of the most specialized recreation facilities such as water play areas, pools, and skate parks.
- RE-F.6. Assure the appropriate quality and quantity of recreation facilities and infrastructure citywide.
- RE-F.7. Develop a diverse range of recreation programs that are sensitive to community needs, interests, and financial resources.
- RE-F.8. Use to advantage recreational opportunities presented by the natural environment, in particular beach/ocean access and open space.
- RE-F.9. Mini-parks and Vest Pocket Parks.
Pursue opportunities to develop mini-parks and vest pocket parks
- a. Identify under utilized city lands with potential for use as mini-parks and community gardens.
 - b. Encourage community participation in development and maintenance of mini-parks and city owned and maintained community gardens.
 - c. Pursue acquisition of lands, as they become available, that may be developed as mini-parks.
- RE-F.10. Enhancements.
Utilize Park and Recreation Enhancements as a means of assuring all communities equitably benefit from quality recreation facilities and infrastructure.
- a. Provide alternative methods (enhancements) of meeting Park and Recreation Guidelines that provide recreation facilities and infrastructure where development of typical facilities and infrastructure are limited by land constraints.
 - b. Implement enhancements when the Park and Recreation Guidelines cannot be reasonably implemented, or when community specific needs and demands require additional flexibility in providing facilities.
 - c. Provide a public forum to identify neighborhood and community preferences for enhancements.
- RE-F.11. Identify, quantify, and consider as fulfilling population-based park needs, for purposes of General Plan and community plan park allocation, those portions of regional parks that satisfy neighborhood park and community park guidelines.
- RE-F.12. Consider existing recreation facilities provided by non-profit organizations when establishing priorities for new facilities.



RE-F.13. Land Purchase.

Establish a council policy or other mechanism to outline parameters for locating and purchasing properties in the city that may be used for recreation purposes.

- a. Develop a process to identify lands that become available for purchase or lease.
- b. Develop criteria to determine potential value for recreation use.
- c. Provide direction on how those lands could be developed for recreation purposes.

RE-F.14. Encourage private development to include recreation elements such as children's play areas, rooftop courts, vest-pocket parks and usable public plazas.

RE-F.15. Include usable passive and/or active public recreation areas in development projects requiring community plan amendments resulting in development intensities beyond those identified in the applicable land use plan.

RE-F.16. Pursue joint-use agreements and facilities as a means of meeting Park and Recreation Guidelines.



The City of San Diego General Plan
Recreation Element